

Culture or cultivation?

[Kültür ya da kültürlenme?]

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Abstract

The essay deals with problem of the so-called classical text representing Western high culture, opposed to the so-called common or popular culture. The British cultural studies claimed that popular culture was everywhere marginal whereas the high culture was dominating. For them culture was anthropologically simply what we do every day and how we live. However, there is also another view of culture as a goal, ideal for which we are striving and which we try to reach by education. It is the Greek idea of *paideion* or the German concept of *Bildung*. Roger Scruton distinguished the high culture which was just 'the best which has been ever thought and said'. As an intuitive basis the article offers a paradigm of statements representing this view from Plato, Cicero and Seneca to Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Georges Sand, Proust, Sartre, and Hannah Arendt. It is fashionable nowadays to 'decanonize' everything but, before, one has to know what ultimately is the canon itself.

Keywords: Classical text, common culture, high culture, *paideion*, cultivation, existential semiotics

Özet

Bu makale, Batı yüksek kültürünü temsil eden sözde klasik metinlerin yaygın ya da popüler kültüre karşıtlığı sorununu ele almaktadır. İngiliz kültürel çalışmaları popüler kültürün her yerde marjinal olduğunu, yüksek kültürün ise baskın olduğunu iddia etmiştir. Onlara göre kültür antropolojik anlamda basitçe her gün ne yaptığımız ve nasıl yaşadığımızdı. Bununla birlikte, kültürün bir amaç, yöneldiğimiz ve eğitim yoluyla ulaşmaya çalıştığımız bir ideal olduğuna dair başka bir görüş daha vardır. Bu Yunanca *paideion* fikri ya da Almanca *Bildung* kavramıdır. Roger Scruton, 'şimdiye kadar düşünülmüş ve söylenmiş olanın en iyisi' olan yüksek kültürün ayırımı yapmıştır. Makale, sezgisel bir temel olarak Platon, Cicero ve Seneca'dan Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Georges Sand, Proust, Sartre ve Hannah Arendt'e kadar bu görüşü temsil eden ifadelerden oluşan bir paradigma sunmaktadır. Bugünlerde her şeyi 'kanondan arındırmak' moda oldu ancak öncelikle kanonun kendisi hakkında daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmamız gerekiyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Klasik metin, ortak kültür, yüksek kültür, *paideion*, kültürlenme, varoluşsal göstergibilim

Résumé

L'essai concerne le problème de soi-disant texte classique représentant l'occidentale haute culture en opposition de commune ou populaire culture. Les études anglaises de culture, cultural studies, a proposé que la culture populaire était partout marginale tandis que l'haute culture était dominante. Pour eux culture était simplement dans le sens anthropologique ce que nous faisons chaque jour et comment nous vivons. Néanmoins, il existe une autre vue de la culture comme un but, idéal vers lequel nous aspirons et que nous essayons d'atteindre par éducation. Cela est l'idée grecque de *paideion* ou en allemand la notion de *Bildung*. Roger Scruton a distingué haute culture comme ce qui est 'le meilleur pensé et dit pour toujours'. Un fondement intuitif nous est fourni par le paradigme des énoncés

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représentants cette vuea partir de Plato, Cicero et Seneca jusqu' à Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Georges Sand, Proust, Sartre et Hannah Arendt. Il est maintenant à la mode de 'décanoniser' tout, mais avant de le faire c'est mieux connaître en fin ce que le canon est lui-même.

Mots-clés : Texte classique, culture commune, haute culture, paideion, cultivation, sémiotique existentielle

1. Introduction

Can the classical European high culture survive in the contemporary world dominated by media and digitalization? Above all, how can anyone in our days in general present such a peculiar statement loaded with values? It presupposes the distinction of two concepts, namely first, what is that classical high culture or shortly said a **classical text**? Roland Barthes said that is like a closet of clothes, in which everything is in good order and put in their proper places. In fact, also another intellectual Italo Calvino, especially in his *Why Read the Classics?* (Calvino, 1991/1993) is dealing with this issue (I am indebted to my postdoc scholar Daniel Röhe about this finding; I have not yet read the essay by Calvino). His first definition is provocative: "it is never a book you are reading, but always one that you are re-reading" - and later on, "...even if you are reading it for the first time!" Moreover, Calvino would say: "the classic is similar to the ancient talismans".

Yet, furthermore, what is our context i.e. the contemporary world or what we simply call culture? Since all we do, the whole of our behavior is naturally cultural in the broad sense of the word.

For the first: what is the classical European high culture o *Bildung*, Cultivation, *Paideia*, exactly speaking?

It can be crystallized into a series of central great names who represent "the best which has been thought or said" (Scruton, 2000, p. 150).

Platon - Aristoteles - Seneca - Cicero - Lucretius - Tuomas Akvinolainen - Dante - Descartes - Madeleine de Scudery - Montaigne - Pascal - Goethe - Schiller - Kant - Hegel - Schopenhauer - Schlegel - Kierkegaard- George Sand - Nietzsche - Richard Wagner - Cosima Wagner - John Ruskin - Heidegger - Hannah Arendt - Thomas Mann - Robert Musil - Stefan Zweig - Herman Hesse - Marcel Proust - Jean Cocteau- Simone de Beauvoir - J.P. Sartre - Claude Lévi-Strauss - Roland Barthes - Michel Foucault -- A.J: Greimas - Umberto Eco - Julia Kristeva - Oscar Parland

This is a mere list of names, but of such ones which have become such concepts, in some cases iconic figures in their contexts and why not even more extensively. They constitute a semiosphere of their own, the universe of signs and symbols. But if we think semiotically and apply the cultural theory by Lotman, they are those entities of the secondary modeling systems, under which there are primary modelling systems. This theory has also been interpreted by Thomas A. Sebeok in his essay, in general semiotics, when he argues that language had not emerged for communication, but for the cognitive articulation of the world (Sebeok, 1991, p. 56).

Then in this case we have to ask, what is that lower semiosphere, wherefrom consequently that 'higher' classical culture could emerge.

2. British Cultural Studies

The aforementioned area has been conquered in the academic world almost completely by the British cultural theory of the 1970s. I use here as my source two works: Chris Barker's *Cultural Studies, Theory & Practice* (2008) and Michael Ryan's *Cultural Studies. A Practical Introduction* (2010). I mention these, not because I would, in any case, support them and would share their views, but since they are typical and represent that common sense, upon which sociology, anthropology, and many other behavioural sciences function.

Paul Willis argues in his preface to Barker's anthology right at the beginning that '*Culture*' is a strange and capacious category.... it is used everywhere...no one can define it exactly, say what it 'really' means...at an everyday and human level, cultural interests, pursuits and identities have never been more important..." (Barker, 2008, p. xxi).

That is true, when a new type of people wandering takes place in the world it is asked whether the immigrants adapt to the main culture, or on the other hand one is dealing with problems of the young: what is youth culture? [which Marcel Danesi (2008) has investigated semiotically]; furthermore how different religions can do with each other, which kind of food is eaten, how one takes care of the health, how different classes of the society articulate their lives.... The series of questions and problems is endless and seems to settle around the concept of culture.

Willis states: Everyone wants to have or make or be considered as possessing cultural significance (op. cit., p. xxi). Yet, here another notion dives up: **significance**; the author does not say 'meaning', 'sense', or 'signification', but uses that more indefinite term. However, what is involved is a symptomatic statement since in the end it becomes clear that the methodology of cultural studies is nothing but semiotics, namely the French intellectualism seen and interpreted from the other side of the bay.

In the continuation it is said that images, sounds, objects, and practices are sign systems, which have the same mechanism as language. However, this view was an abandoned concept in semiotics, a long time ago, because the non-verbal sign systems function differently from the verbal ones. The subject is discussed only in connection to consumption markets: "how we are produced as subjects" (op. cit., p. 11). Cultural theory declares itself fashionably anti-essential, without taking into account that the subject is the agent who makes choices and is not a mere discursive construction.

In the list of 'Key thinkers' Saussure is given his true place, but otherwise, the French structuralists appear only as single names detached from that network of intellectual debates, which has been gone in the continental context, about their theories. The notion of transcendence is misunderstood when it is noted that truth is not a fixed eternal object, but our knowledge is dependent on time and pace (op. cit., p. 21). Of course, transcendence is not somewhere 'there' but is internalized into us when we have chosen its values for our *Dasein*. In what follows as the dominant methods of analysis are declared, however, semiotics, narrative theory, and deconstruction. A TV news with illustrations is a constructed narrative, as everyone knows. As early as Greimas criticized the so-called realistic discourse and studied those mechanisms whereby the illusion of reality was produced (a. o. in natural sciences). Here one may notice how surprisingly close Thomas A. Sebeok came to his 'adversary' in semiotics by saying that semiotics after all was something about illusion and reality.

At the end of the aforementioned book is said that the main line of cultural studies is not empirical but theoretical. But where are then semiotic analyses by the cultural studies movement?

Hence it seems that we have not yet gained the solution to our problem of two cultures.

The other anthology brings before us a big quantity of empirical fields in which culture manifests in our time. The contents of Michael Ryan's work already provide us with the paradigm in which the scrutinization of our problem might be situated: industry, gender, sexuality, ideologies, rhetorics, ethnicity, identity, lifestyle, subcultures, consumption culture, fashion, music, media, visual culture, the fame of the performers, body and things, transnationality, globalization, and postcoloniality.

The book launches eloquently: *The word culture has always had multiple meanings. In one sense of the word, culture is inseparable from human life. Everything from how we dress to what we eat, from how we speak to what we think, is culture...* (Ryan, 2010, p. viii). But then immediately an anthropological view is opened when it is indicated that: *culture becomes visible when we travel between 'cultures', and when we look back in time to other 'cultures' than our own.*

To this one might say that so it has been since the emergence of European orientalism in the *Persian Letters* by Montesquieu, (1919/1721) in which two princes arrive at Parisian salons and awaken enchantment by their strange essence and clothes. "How anyone can be Persian?" the ladies in the salon sigh. Yet, when the princes dress the next day commonly i.e. like in Paris, they are no longer paid any attention. They have become culturally valueless. To Ryan's mind culture aims to yield common thought, and uniformity according to the prevailing standards, norms, and rules. Accordingly, culture is the same as the norms which follow in our lives. But it is shifted to the things and artifacts like buildings, Hollywood or Bollywood films, or to music, which we listen to like techno or rap. The cultural studies defend the marginal and avant-garde. Therefore it is ideological albeit falls then into conflict with that statement by Terry Eagleton, that ideology always concerns other people, never me. My own speech is always true, they are other people who speak 'ideology' or a kind of *falsches Bewusstsein*.

Brett Ingram's essay about music deals only with popular music. Music occupies that obscure field in which the difference between mind and body, conscious and unconscious, myself and others is mixed. One pop artist sing "Lose yourself in music" to attain a transcendental state, such as in the hit by Madonna in the 1980s "Get into the Groove". One may thus guess that such thing as art music is not spoken about in this chapter at all, and it is after all hard to imagine that popular music was in any case something marginal if it molds the worldview of the youth as an opposition to traditional authorities. Human agents exploit music to make us think and act in a certain way (op. cit., p. 108). All know the role of popular music a.o. in presidential elections.

3. The common culture and high culture by Roger Scruton

Now rideau has been opened in front of the spectacles of contemporary culture. I have exposed all this to show that the reader would not believe that the author lives in his ivory tower without any contact with the situation in the present society. Yet, there is still one British philosopher who has pondered the issue in a challenging manner, namely the aesthetician Roger Scruton. He has published also a large tractate on musical aesthetics (Scruton, 1997), in which he claims that music would not be language, I do not want to penetrate this debate here, but in his small booklet *Modern Culture* (Scruton, 2000) he gives us noteworthy distinctions. Moreover, it is a courageous gesture in the above-presented British context to examine in general the issue the book is dealing with. There we encounter again the notions of common culture and high culture, which is about the basic issue in this essay.

He dares to enter the soil of German culture when he defines the concept of *Kultur* which stems from Herder. It is according to Scruton the life-blood of a people, the flow of moral energy that holds society intact. Instead, the *Zivilisation* represents manners, laws, and technical know-how. Nations can have the same civilization but different cultures. Then Norbert Elias

used similar distinctions in *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, Culture was characterized as spirit, *Geist* - which was of course German - and civilisation in the frivolous Italian-French world. Later Wilhelm Humboldt interpreted culture as cultivation, which was not possessed by everyone since not all had the possibilities to learn what was needed. Some were more cultivated than others. Scruton thus uses the term cultivation to mean the Humboldtian *Bildung*,

Scruton distinguishes the common culture, which is just anthropological from high culture referring to Matthew Arnold. In Scruton's mind high culture in our civilization contains knowledge **that is far more significant than anything that can be absorbed from the channels of popular communication**. This is a hard belief to justify but in this respect, I share his view. The cultivation of identity is a mode of 'being-for-others', Scruton says, to use an existentialist jargon. He refers to the beginning of cultural studies; Raymond Williams wanted to foreground the inferior culture of the people, through which they affirmed their solidarity in the face of oppression and expressed their sense of belonging. And this oppressed culture was to him just the popular culture,

But the essential thing for Scruton is just the concept of a free subject. Only a subject who can make free ethical choices lives his own life. He refers to the Kantian 'transcendental self' which is the locus of our freedom. One may also use terms like soul, spirit, or self (Scruton, op. cit., p. 12). Thus, ethical vision is to him the criterion that separates common and high culture, The Finnish psychiatrist and writer Oscar Parland, an honorary member of the Semiotic Society of Finland, came to the same conclusion, that in fact, it is ethics which in fact determines our fate more than we imagine. One may agree that of all the values just ethical ones are crucial in high culture, i.e. they are necessary but not sufficient conditions, to constitute the language of a classical text. There are also other values.

4. Existential semiotics as a solution

Now it is proper to introduce one theory which will be next elucidating more or less explicitly the problem of the high culture. What is involved is the so-called existential semiotics which I have been developing during the last thirty-forty years - beginning from my work *Existential Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2000) until the books *Sein und Schein* (Tarasti, 2015) and *Transcending Signs* (Tarasti, 2022), at Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin. It is by no means any return to existentialism, but is simply a combination of two sources of inspiration, **continental philosophy** and **classical semiotics**. By the former, I understand the lines of Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, and J.P. Sartre. By the latter the whole tradition of classical semiotics, from de Saussure to Peirce, French structuralists, particularly Claude Lévi-Strauss and A. J. Greimas and his Paris school.

The core idea of existential semiotics concerns the notion of *Dasein*, which term I do not translate at all to foreign languages, i.e. but which is being-there, *être-là* or *essere-ci*, meaning the world in which our subject lives with his/her objects. This theory is necessarily not any Cartesian a-chronic universe, but, for instance, Greimas's famous semiotic square becomes a temporal *zemic* model. The term stems from its inner movement between the extreme poles of the square forming a 'z' and 'emic' which means 'inner' as an opposition to an ethicist, external one, the terms used by the American linguist Kenneth Pike.

What semantic investment we do to Greimas's categories S1, S2, non-S2, and non-S1 stems from Hegel's science of logics or the modes of being he calls *an-sich-sein* and *für-sich-sein* being in itself and being for others. When we combine them with the pair of concepts of *Moi* and *Soi* which appear in French philosophy, we get cases of *an-mir-sein*, *für-mich-sein*, *für-sich-sein*, and *an-sich-sein*. Empirically they correspond to the cases of **body (Moi1)**, **person (Moi2)**, **social practice (Soi2)**, and **values (Soi1)**. They constitute the hypothetical structure of the human mind. In the model there is a constant movement from *Moi1* to *Soi1* of sublimation of the kinetic energy, and then from *Soi1* to *Moi1*, or embodiment of the values. They are equal to Lévi-Strauss's categories in his structural anthropology of *le sensible* and *l'intelligible*. In the philosophy of Theodor Adorno, they are Me and Society which are in perpetual conflict (strictly linguistically speaking the term *Soi* is the Self, not society, but via philosophical reasoning, it can be interpreted in this manner, I am indebted for this comment to Prof. Juhani Härmä).

Accordingly, the *zemic* model becomes a flexible tool to observe all possible phenomena of signification and significance. Moreover, there is in the background the idea of transcendence which has two species: elevation or striving for transcendence or *trans-a-scendence* and sinking down from transcendence to the earth i.e. *trans-de-scendence*, (the terms stemming from Gabriel Marcel) which is the same as the event of annunciation pondered by the theologians. The subject is free in his/her act of transcending to stop the organic inner movement in *zemic* and shift to the level of the so-called *supra-zemic*, in which he examines and observes the notions that appeared in *zemic*. Hegel called them by the word *Wesen* i.e. essence, which was something that had been, *Gewesen*. To apply the model is thus not difficult at all.

5. The actors and practices of a classical text

From this starting point, I shall start a closer examination of the case of the classical European high culture.

Those cultural artefacts or signs, which were discussed above occupy the existential semiotics of the sphere of the so-called *sig-zemics*. That entity can be divided into four parts according to the structure of *zemic*, i.e. into four articulations of *Moi* and *Soi*.

First *Moi1* - Peirce's *qualisign* - means that in order to be a classic, i.e. classically high-cultural, those texts have to possess some overwhelming **quality**, which distinguishes them from anything else - in other words what is involved is the Greatness or *Grösse* of Alfred Einstein, which is the same as the density of a text (Einstein, 1976).

Second, those texts have been produced by some **actor**, whose life, history, and cultural context are known by us. Yet, we do not need to interpret those texts as such as 'historical empathy' by Charles Rosen (1997, p. 47) because they have a direct impact on us. However, if we know the author we are convinced of its classical status because those figures have it in our culture. Why?

Since actors like Dante, Goethe, Proust, etc. are part of that social **praxis** *Soi2* which has set them to that position as a classic.

Moreover, that social practice is justified, and legitimated by certain **values** or *Soi1*.

In other words, one can say that the classical entity emerges in the interaction between *Moi2* and *Soi2* and it is therefore arbitrary or conventional as a phenomenon. But this event of choice is surrounded by two "absolute" spheres, namely the quality of the text itself, which makes it timeless, universal ... and the value, aesthetic, ethical, or other, which is likewise universal and launches the process from the other end.

diagram *Moi1* *Moi2*

Soi2 *Soi1*

Then, if I say: *Longtemps je me suis couché*...we know immediately: well, French, Proust, *A la recherche*... and we are humble in front of that phrase, it has conquered us. Or *Wer immer strebend sich bemüht* ...or *Verweile doch, du bist so schön*.... we realize: yes this is Goethe, *Faust*, we are again facing something timeless.... or if one says: "...in the midway of our life..." we notice: that is Dante and from *Divina comedia* etc.

Again the actor: a classic is *eine schöne Seele* (Goethe, s. d.) or metaphysical subject (Marcel, 1927) or an aesthete tired by boredom of his life (Kierkegaard), but altogether it is a certain character, individual *sinsign* (see Peirce), part of the narrative course.

All this takes place only at the level of *sig-zemic* or symbols. But in which phase do we start to speak about cultivation? One has to go back to the *Dasein* or the world of the *zemic*, and the concrete subject living there. Therefore, one needs a subject who enlivens and rather as early as young to those classical actors, and who by this route, by *Einfühlung* enters that world and starts to behave himself according to it. The heroes of the French Revolution portrayed by Lotman in his essay on theatricality, pronounce as their last words before guillotine words from ancient tragedy. There is no cultivation without this process of internalization. At the same time, one moves into the historical and cultural world of time and place.

We may think of a small boy in a lyceum who with his fellow discovers the music of Richard Wagner, and this happens in the 1960s in a Nordic country where this composer is not performed almost at all. Albeit there are no records this composer attracts irresistibly. Then one of them finds the work *Dichtung und Wahrheit* by Goethe, and starts to read it, and adopts it as his model and idol so that he finally writes an essay on him for the baccalaureate exam. Goethe has become part of his *Lebenswelt*. He also discovers Balzac's *Comedie Humaine*.

How is it possible that one gets interested in the 20th century in a writer who lived two hundred years earlier? Certain social factors are needed. That young has to be able to live in peace and develop his fantasy world without the external reality with it restlessly disturbing it. He must be allowed to escape to the world of cultivation. He must be able to develop slowly, not rapidly and efficiently. Cultivation must become to him a second sun (Ovidius).

Now if we think of aesthetic education as an event in which the young internalizes the classical culture, then the criteria by the Finnish aesthete and writer J.A. Hollo are valid: education to the art, by the art, for the art and education as such as art. This is the process Roger Scruton just called cultivation. The young person under question must so to say adopt those values which are in the background of a classic, but he does not need to be aware of them. They have to be available so to say in that milieu in which he is living.

Let us hurt the other side of our tractate, culture. What is understood by culture may be and often is far afield from that ideal world of the classics. If we assume the view of culture by the British cultural studies, culture is all behaviour that surrounds man in his present reality whether he wants it or not. How can he learn to distinguish and select from it the elements of classical culture? Perhaps one has to resort to the inner ability instinct, intuition *le moi profond* (Bergson), who will guide him here?

The semiotic cultural theory like the one by Lotman is neutral regarding the values, it only portrays cultural phenomena, their semiosphere, and acting. It is not participating nor making one to participate.

In France, a mistake was made when the high culture was equaled to the bourgeois world which one had to oppose. For some Roland Barthes, Donald Dock, and Racine were on the same semiotic dimension, and they used certain narrative technics. Iconoclastic semiotics was destructive everywhere considering the high culture. It was made ridiculous - in Finland in the Finnish movie classics the crazy professor with all its variants. or a scene where a comic popular and rustic type meets a music critic at a concert. Yet, art music managed to preserve to some extent its serious nature.

Yet, just the idea that popular culture was repressed and marginalized led to the fashionable trend of **decanonisation**, and as a consequence of it to the cancel culture. Artworks could be doomed ideologically just due to their misuse. Is then also high culture something ideological? In the dictatorship classical can be adopted as a part of the repressive mechanism. However, Roland Barthes became favoured a.o. in Great Britain just as a prophet of popular culture like Theodor Adorno. What a paradox! Adorno did not accept even the jazz music. The theoreticians of popular music declared it marginal, but they committed a mistake because it is just thanks to the enormous ecstatic bubble reality of media, it was contrarily the classical art and culture that were marginalized.

Nevertheless, one always returns to the classics. They never get old. They do not get outworn in the use, because one never gets tired of them. Then we are not only dealing with one art like literature but a pluriartistic intertextual field (Ruskin, 1918; Ruskin, 1987).

In Proust's essay on *Reading* he tells of his aunt who knew with absolute certainty how one prepares a *biffsteak aux pommes frites* or how one receives guests charmingly, or how one plays *Sonate pathétique* with the right style and without pedal. Cultivation and high culture are seen in a man/woman in his/ her behaviour, both verbal and non-verbal. Cultivation, so to say, is communicated to others. It is not the same as obeying certain rules of a *langue*, but rather a kind of play, in which it is important to have à *l'aisance*, freedom, as Greimas put it. But the one who knows the rules of a high culture recognizes similar conduct in another person immediately.... and correspondingly the lack of it. Behaviour can be studied in *Etiquette* by Emily Post, and the *Caractères (Luonnekuvia)* by La Bruyère (1958)--- or by the novel of Marcel Proust. Just as in the language, one may learn high style from some John Ruskin since, as we know, the more there are words whose roots are in ancient Latin or Greek, the more elegant they sound (again this view is laughed at by linguists for whom any linguistic expression is just only an object to be studied). Yet, Ruskin was one of the founders of the arts education movement in Europe, and his theory of the ideas of artwork, like ideas of power, beauty, symmetry, etc. is still valid about all the arts, not only the visual ones.

However, the idea of a high culture should not be used to discriminate against other cultures. They would shout in quire: with which right do you delineate only your own values as the source of the art in the proper sense? Are not our AI art, performances, TikTok, and Instragram creations also art? Is such a speech not really antiquarian, regressive elitist, and reactionary?

Nevertheless, the fact is that certain young people automatically without any guidance from the environment search their way to the sources of classical high culture. Yet, it is true that one needs some tutor or a fellow of the same mentality. The *sig-zemic* world of classical culture is dynamized and it becomes cultivated when a young is animated and identified by it. Why does this happen?

6. Representatives of high culture

Every classic has a crystallized slogan from which he is immediately recognized. High culture is thus just like Scruton said and he again is quoting Arnold (Scruton, op. cit., p. 150): "the best that has been thought and said".

Platon: aporia, the metaphor of the cave; Aristoteles: the concepts of soul and substance; Seneca: "Happy life is based upon correct and certain judgment and it is inalterable"; Cicero: "The beauties of the life: self mastering, moderation, complete subordination of passions, and *decorum*."; Thomas Aquinas and Church fathers: *Credo quia absurdum*; Dante: " ..in the midway of our life..."; Descartes: "*passions - cogito ergo...*"; Madeleine de Scudery: *précieuses ridicules*; Pascal: "... the loneliness of the eternal spaces frightens me"; Goethe: "... *wer immer strebend sich bemüht den können wir erlösen*"; Schiller: aesthetic education, *Spieltrieb*; Kant: *transcendent and transcendental*; Hegel *phenomenology of spirit and essence*; Schopenhauer: the world as will and cognition; Fr. Schlegel: " ... *all is fragment, and art work is like a hedgehog*"; Kierkegaard: "What is a poet? An unhappy man, who complains in his heart, but whose lips are such that every sigh and shouting, which stream from them, sounds as a piece of beautiful music (*Enten-Eller*)"; Giacomo Leopardi: *Pensieri*; E.T.A. Hoffmann: *Murr, étudiant en belles lettres*; George Sand: "...*aucune ambition, aucun rêve de bonheurs personnels pour moi-même en ce monde mais beaucoup d'espoir et d'efforts pour le bonheur des autres*"; Richard Wagner: *Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit...frei musikalisch ausrausen... die holde deutsche Kunst*"; Cosima Wagner: "...*und Richard arbeitet...*"; Nietzsche: "Birth of tragedy from the spirit of music"; John Ruskin: "Ideas of Power...Only that one makes progress in his life whose heart is softening..."; Heidegger: " *Being and Time... das Man seinDasein...attunement...collapse or Scheitern*"; Hannah Arendt: "... the infinitely improbable can always be realized"; Thomas Mann: *Adrian Leverkühn alias Doktor*

Faust- Robert Musil: Man without properties in the fictive state of Kakania; Stefan Zweig: "... *the world of yesterday*"; Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*; Herman Hesse: *Glasperlenspiel*; Marcel Proust "... *longtemps je me suis couché de bonne heure. Parfois à peine ma bougie teinte, mes yeux se fermaient si vite que je n'avais pas le temps me dire: Je m'endors...*" (1982); Jean Cocteau: "... *jusqu'ou on peut aller trop loin*"; Simone de Beauvoir: *parole interminable* - years of force; Jean-Paul P Sartre: "... existentialism is humanism....transcendence is our creation... *l'enfer sont les autres*"; Claude Lévi-Strauss: "*Nous ne voulons pas montrer comment nous pensons dans les mythes mais comment les mythes se pensent dans les hommes et à leur insu*"; Roland Barthes: "...*seule la métaphore est exacte*"; Michel Foucault: "... the epistemes of the classical ages... *surveiller et punir*"; A.J.Greimas: "*Le savoir sont petits îlots dans la mer de croire...*"; Julia Kristeva: "...*étrangers à nous-même...*" (1988); Umberto Eco: "...signs are social forces..." (1971); Oscar Parland: "Ethical factors in the human soul create his destiny..." (1966).

However, is there in this classical high culture the hope of the future? The world in which it is exercised will perhaps not get off of its rails as the world without it. Is it so?

7. The journey to cultivation

Or do we have here the appraisal of elitism i.e, the idea that one group declares itself omniscient and competent and distinguishes itself from others as an 'esoteric club'? The elites have their educational sites: in France, the Polytechnical University, *ENA*, Sorbonne, *Ecole Normale Supérieure* - it is enough that one has passed it, nothing else is needed, and the doors are open to all professions and positions in the society. In the United States, there are the top universities in which everyone wants to enroll.

The elites seem to realize Goethe's maxim *Das Wahre war schon längst gefunden, hat edle Geisterschaft erfunden, das alte Wahre, fass es an!* The truth was discovered a long time ago, a noble fraternity established, the old truth, take it again! - Or in Finland the Normal lyceums which still teach Latin. There is also a phrase in the style of Kalevala: "The primal source is deep, acquire it." (*On alkulähde syvä, ammenna*) Are the holders of the classical high culture like the Graal knights in *Parsifal*? Yes, if they do not forget the principle: *Durch Mitleid wissend*.

A cultivated person is a servant of others, the air around him is always light to breathe. It is so because he can afford it. He is so immeasurably far away from others that he can be humble, like the Guermantes in Proust's novel, who in the opera make services to housekeepers. Their mastership is inner like Herbert Marcuse once said.

Nevertheless, the quality of high culture is not bound by the epistemes of the period, but rather its representatives are *des esprits contestataires* because they have conviction and vision. They do not fall into the trap of postcolonial thought by subordinating others. This rescues them from the dictatorship of conditions of which Georg Henrik v. Wright spoke. A cultivated person can formulate things beautifully and express them without insulting others. What is involved is a broad problem of how the cultivation is manifested and does not remain as a hidden secret of the few selected.

Then is cultivation the same as tradition? We do things as always before, as we are accustomed to do and we get satisfaction and certainty from it ... although *Tradition ist Schlamperei* as Gustav Mahler said: Tradition is neglecting things. The canons of art must be animated and conquered always anew in a process that has been called **animation** in cultural politics. Or we return again to the situation in which our subject arrives at the classical cultural heritage and experiences it again as tempting in the process of cultivation or *Bildung*. This event is characterized by freedom or as the inventor of the term Wilhelm Humboldt noticed: we have *Lehrfreiheit*, the freedom to teach concerning those who mediate the high culture to others. Since mediation is indeed needed. And we have *Lernfreiheit* i.e. the freedom to learn, or we decide what we want to learn and we have *Lebensfreiheit*, or freedom to live ... no one can restrict how we want to live.

When our (young) subject enters the sources of that classical culture what happens? ... or has already happened before. He encounters the universe of symbols (Ernst Cassirer), in which all the signs and texts have a certain basic quality above all, which directly touches the destinatee.

Yet, he also has at the same time knowledge about the person or those persons who have created those texts or 'author is not dead', but lives as a kind of *double* of the text, in the consciousness of our subject. Just as Proust said about the human communication that it in fact takes place just more with these *doubles* than with real persons, more with their simulacra, whom we carry in our minds; then the symbol in question belongs to a certain continuum of signs, semiosphere, which is maintained by the social practice, institution, manner, genre, which as such has a connotation of cultivation in our minds. Let us say like university, adult education center, conservatory, art academy or other.

Finally, behind that text representing the cultivation there is as our starting point a certain universe of values of which our subject is convinced. However, now the question is again also about mediation: who transmits those values to the young people? In general, a youngster adopts them in a dialogue with others by listening to others, imitating, and admiring them. If what is involved is a certain praxis he joins it as a student, member, or supporter, and assumes as the ingredients of his identity the belonging to something, which was to Julia Kristeva's mind the most important there. Furthermore, if he meets the person, artist, philosopher, statesman, or leader i.e. a man who has realized that praxis and value and finally produced

that sig-zemic or signs or texts which represent the classical high culture. He/she may be an iconic person of his field and country, i.e. a leader selected by its epistemes.

Here we have many 'existential semiotic' phases, in the wander years of our subject. When we speak of the European culture one thinks that one has to travel in all those places where the classical culture has been born. One has to pursue the *grand tour*. Yet, as early as Seneca argued: "Those who consumed their lives by travelling abroad will experience that they have many acquaintances but no friends. The same fate is at those who do not attempt to get familiar profoundly with anything, but leave them all, hastily and hurrying only after having looked at them" (Seneca, op. cit 187).

So classical cultivation becomes a locality. It is not the same whether a novel is written by an Irishman, a Pole, a Greek, or a Frenchman, and it is not the same whether a symphony is written by a Finn or a German, Who claims to represent the Europeanity *an sich* commits that error mentioned by Klaus Mann, who warns about the *Gleichschaltigkeit*, Evenmindedness of Europe. No one has the right to declare himself as the only right canon. If that occurs, then it is proper to do the decanonisation, liberation from the limiting practice, and there we can use as our supervisors even some Americans like John Cage (1981).

Yet, one other means is to throw oneself into an anthropological experience, to see our civilization through the eyes of others, and to remember that on the side of classical high culture, there are 'classical' heritages elsewhere. I have nowhere encountered so fine manners as in Iran, the heritant of the Persia of Kyros, and in Japan, likewise a state with an emperor.

8. Aesthetic and ethical values

Next, we scrutinize the classical text based on its *Moi1* or mere quality, or *sig-zemic*. In this field we meet numerous alternatives only when we have examined them all can we note whether our task has been fulfilled or whether it is impossible in the end. Often the qualities of *Moi1* or signs are in so close connection with other modes of our *zemic* model that we can see how they evolved just from them and we cannot imagine their existence without an actor, social practice, or value (*Moi2*, *Soi2*, and *Soi1*).

Of all these values Scruton emphasized the ethical aspects. But are the aesthetic values not as essential? If we think of the traditional manifestations of the aesthetic, like the Finnish aesthetician Eino Krohn has presented them in his treatise *Esteettinen maailma* The Aesthetic World, one meets categories of tragical, sublime, comical, gracious, everyday-like, grotesque et. (Krohn, 1965, pp. 91-134). A classical text naturally exploits all these categories, and behind it, one may notice all these subtleties of the aesthetic, they articulate it from the viewpoint of the values; but are they sufficient, so that they could be considered classical? If one thinks of some Monroe C. Beardsley about what is aesthetically beautiful, one encounters as well the concepts of symmetry, dynamic form, etc. i.e. categories which are, however, regarding the aesthetic content rather neutral... Likewise, there exists the value of truth. Many artworks have as their substance the effort to aim for truth. In Arnold Schoenberg's mind, beauty should be replaced by the concepts of *Wahrhaftigkeit* (truthfulness); Proust taught that the task of the literature is to manifest the truth; Mahler again argued that *Die kunst darf nicht schmücken*, Art should not decorate. A classical text does not want to make an impact by its external qualities but by its inner values.

However one may also consider that the classicality of a classical text is something so difficult to define that our assignment is unrealizable. Vladimir Jankélévitch speaks about the charm of art (*charme*), which is that *presque-rien*, almost-nothing which is in any case the most crucial.

Le charme est, comme le sourire ou le regard, cosa mentale; on ne sait ni à quoi il tient, ni en quoi il consiste, ni même s'il consiste en quelque chose, ni où l'assigner...Il' est ni dans le sujet ni dans l'objet, mais passe de l'un à l'autre comme un influx... tout dépende du moment et du contexte" (Jankélévitch, 1961, p. 131). Jankélévitch speaks about music, but as early as, according to Plato's *State*, the music and the soul have a similar structure (see the article by Christian Vassilev, 2023).

Is the classical text something that surprises us, which breaks the automatizations of everyday life? Berlioz's music is based upon *l'esthétique de l'imprevu*, the aesthetics of the imprevisible; Mahler advised Stravinsky when he heard his *Firebird*, that would it not be better to start with something surprising which immediately grasps the listener? In the climaxes of Wagner's operas in their emotional culminations, one shifts from the German *Sprechgesang* to the Italian *bel canto*. Wagner completely accepted it, it was a classical beauty to him. So, the prophecy of Sieglinde of the future Siegfried in *Die Walküre* is such and the theme which occurs there is only once heard later in *Ring*, namely at its end, as the theme of the hope. The same the love duet of Brünnhilde and Siegfried at the beginning of *Götterdämmerung*, the last happy moment in that tragedy, is *bel canto* at its highest.

Does a classical text always follow some model or precursor? Is classical European art a chain of iconic models or examples? If an architect imitates the columns of antiquity, one may believe he is creating a classical 'text', although that would be rather pseudo-classicality. Like in music, the classical style can deteriorate into mannerisms of academic style as Guido Adler said in his *Der Stil in der Musik* (1911, pp. 225-226): "...it is lacking one of the main attributes of classical art, the true force of expression, deep truth of life and so its beauty is only superficial": Rather when one sees the curves of the roof at an air terminal by the architect Eero Saarinen in the United States or the designs of Alvar Aalto, one realizes that artist

has created something absolutely classical which cannot fall into the category of the *méconnu*, misunderstood by Jankélévitch. Behind every piece by Brahms there looms Beethoven, but does this make him a classic?

According to Gertrude Stein, one has to distinguish geniuses from would-be-geniuses. There are perhaps also as-if-classics i.e. the authors and texts. Following Veihinger's *als ob* philosophy, that means those to whom we have a relationship as if they were classics, one may think of perhaps the town of Latina built in neoclassical style close to Rome during Mussolini. So there could be fake classics.

From this, we get into the question of whether classical texts can be generated. If the rules of their production have been revealed by an analysis one might think it were possible. So we have entered the digital age of AI which in the first phase of this essay was considered. Athanasios Votsis has shown that when a picture is reduced into digital units one may generate pictures almost identical like the faces of Peirce and the philosopher Bradley which look very similar. Yet, the computer does not understand that what is involved is a portrait: it sees only the picture which dissolves into smaller entities. In this sense, the eventual intentionality of a classical text would remain in digitalization entirely without attention. When one reads and looks at the analysis of Greta Garbo's face by Roland Barthes in his work *Mythologies* one realizes what this means (Barthes, 2010, pp. 94-95). That face evokes all the moments where it has been seen earlier and what the actress has uttered and done on screen like: "I want to be alone".

Is then a classical text something organic? The myth of organic nature, man's psyche, and artworks has been strong since romanticism (Goethe). In the semiotic regards the classicality would rest in the fact that when an organism recognizes by the *Ich-Ton* i.e. he picks up from *Umwelt* those features which correspond to the ideal *Gestalt*; *Gestalt* again would mean the external shape of a text, which is the same as its design. The Canadian composer David Lidov has a theory that the musical form is either design or grammar (Lidov, 1980, p. 55). One of them would be foregrounded, How that would fit into a classical text? The Italian Paolo Rosato (2013) has an idea that a congenial artwork, particularly a musical one follows the principle of the so-called homeostasis, i.e. always returns after deviations to the starting point, the basic structure.

On the other hand, one may think that a classic writer is an artist who does not have any model or idol but is pure creativity, in Finland like the young writer Miki Liukkonen. The writer can aim at using some hitherto unknown vocabulary like Volter Kilpi or Aleksis Kivi who created the Finnish language in his poems, novels, and plays. James Joyce's language is musical. Just like Wagner's music, it is a kind of prose. At Proust every phrase is a mere phrase a jewel, it does not matter whether its length is many pages.

9. Metaphors and tropes

The rhetoric figures may well have something to do with a classical text and its eloquence. In the play by Molière *Maladie imaginaire* the doctor says: *Nous avons changé tout cela*. This means on stage humoristically the human body, but when the phrase serves as a metaphor outside that context it refers to a situation in which someone has done some senseless or impossible change. Ellipse again is a figure in which it is enough it is enough if one receives only the beginning of a text and on the basis of that he completes it. For instance, it is enough to say: *Ceterum censeo...* and the rest is clear: *Karthago delendum est...* Or in a fugue by J.S. Bach it is sufficient to hear only the first bars of a theme, and the listener can imagine the rest by his musical memory. This one has to take into account of course at a performance.

Interesting figures are on the side of metaphors also tropes which the American scholar of classical style Robert S. Hatten has examined, Hence, metaphor is a situation in which one sign or text adopts two different meanings. For instance, in a classical music text, the sonata theme can have two consecutive characters or motifs but they have a common semantic signified. Like at the beginning of the finale of Beethoven's piano sonata op. 106, one hears one after the other a gallant motif and a march topos (Hatten, 2004, p. 218) Yet, they hold together. Otherwise in general the toposes are important elements in classical texts. The citation of familiar topos naturally increases the possibility that a text gets into that category.

However, the concept of trope could be expanded to my mind also in the intertextual direction, so that the other signifier of a trope is an imagined text of some other genre. Like the theme of the slow movement of Beethoven's piano sonata op. 31 is E flat major, would refer to Goethe's poem *Über allen Gipfeln liegt ein Ruh und da spürest du kaum einen Hauch*. The suspended dominant function and chromaticism in the accompaniment is according to Hatten something stoic and dignified, but he uses also the term abnegation for it (Hatten, 1994, p. 59).

Another example: Watteau's painting *L'embarquement de l'isle de Cythère* is related to Francois Couperin's clavecin piece *Les baricades mystérieuses*,,, and later to Debussy piano work *L'isle joyeuse*. The beginning of Chopin's F minor Phantasy evokes the famous slogan *Noch ist Polen nich verloren* because it refers to Poles in prison in Siberia after the uprising of 1834. The end of Nietzsche's book *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* evokes by mere rhythm and enthusiastic elevation of the finale of Beethoven's IX symphony. Correspondingly, the expansion of the horn motif in the side section of the finale of Beethoven's V symphony, in performance, like Hans von Bülow did it (Weingartner, 1906, p. 80), brings to our minds the words *Seid umschlungen Millionen* at the ode *An die Freude* by Friedrich Schiller. Or we have here so to say the same semantic gesture. In Greimas's theory, such fragments of a text were called bi-isotopic i.e. they manifested the complex isotopy. All witty talk in which understatement techniques are used is based upon this figure since the play by Oscar Wilde

The Importance of Being Ernest. Reynaldo Hahn's melody *Si mes vers avaient des ailes* gets a quite new significance when we learn that it was the emblem motif of the Allies for the start of the invasion of Normandy, and the London Broadcast company played as a sign to the French resistance movement. Examples can be found endlessly in the history of art.

10. From history to sociology

Is there behind a classical text some legisign which justifies it? For instance, iconicity in the sense that the actor or *Moi* as its producer is an icon of a nation or mankind's history when automatically all they say or do is classical. Like Socrates' last speech in Plato's dialogue.

Yet, if one would finally discover the secret of a classical text and one would produce them without limits so that one would ultimately live only in the world of classical texts, then would we be satisfied? Does not a classical text need as its opposition something non-classical just as in cultural semiotics the culture itself needs always a non-culture to be settled? As such Lotmanian theory is not bound with values and it does not help us living in our *Lebenswelt* or *Dasein*. In this respect, it is not participating theory or something making one participate (Lotman, 2001).

Is perhaps the classicality an unattainable ideal, which following Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is realized only when the process of manifesting reaches its absolute end? The course of history is based upon errors through which one proceeds towards that ideal, *das Absolute*, and in this journey, classical texts serve so to say as our guides. A classical text can also function as therapy in a difficult situation such as Seneca (1964) and Cicero (1967) portrayed in their philosophies. Then we so to say encounter the metaphysical consolation, which was characteristic of ancient tragedy according to Nietzsche (1964).

It is still possible to pursue that sociological interpretation like Pierre Bourdieu when he speaks about the distinction (Bourdieu, 1979); a classical text is chosen for certain social classes and then we return to the debate that speech about high culture is a kind of elitism. The starting point of Bourdieu was, as known, the division of Paris into arrondissements and their typical inhabitants. Everyone who knows Paris is aware that people who live in the XIV or XVI arrondissement have a different worldview than those who live in Montparnasse or Montmartre and that the urban atmosphere changes at once when one shifts to another sphere. The same phenomenon is strongly visible also in Berlin. In Paris, one notices it as early as when changing from the metroline I to XIII which leads to Saint-Denis, the Paris University VIII. Would then the high culture be a privilege of only those living in a certain area? In practice, social class and aesthetic taste do not coincide, but classical high culture can well appear in city areas of working classes or immigrants. The survival of the high culture is not a sociological problem in this sense.

After this panorama we have probably entered a situation in which we are very uncertain - at the intellectual level - how we could answer to the question we set at the beginning. To some people, it is in principle completely irrelevant. To those who adhere to creativity theories, it is indifferent whether the result that emerges is high culture or not. Yet, even those who do not explicitly favour high culture, it would be perhaps a pity if it would disappear and the world would be consequently poorer lacking one of its *significances*.

11. Conclusion

Now to make a summary and result of what was examined above, we can still add some issues to our discussion. Namely the influence of values was already stated but we may argue further. I was asking whether such entity as a **classical text** really exists and I had to admit that it is not quite certain in every respect. So many additional comments appeared as well as problems about what is after all involved. Those cases of 'statements' picked up from a broad community of intellectuals through centuries, were presented as a kind of intuitive basis for the inquiry. At least they were considered valid for the subjectivity of the author. If one were an Heideggerian protagonist that would be sufficient.

But intuition? I once asked from A.J. Greimas whether intuition was needed at the rigorous semiotic analysis. Yes, of course, he said, but the question is whether you can make your intuition into a model to be communicated to others.

So the problem turns into the one of language or metalanguage whereby we can deal and convey our intuition. What we transmit then? Sure, certain values which loom behind the statement (see above those tens of 'typical' cases of a classical text).

Yet, which values we are then sharing? Are they manifesting a given axiology ...or worse: ideology. If they are ideological, it certainly diminishes their position as a universal value. "In speaking of ideology, it is typical that one supposes that what is involved are others, not me. Hence ideology is essentially an egocentric type of utterance" (Tarasti, 2015, p. 145). Or to quote Ugo Volli who said that ideology consists of common sense statements which are taken as unchangeable and universal (ibid.p.144). So, is there any means to get rid from the trap of ideology? Perhaps we encounter the Cartesian dilemma that we can doubt everything but the fact we are doubting we cannot doubt. Accordingly accepting this relativity habiting in every statement about the world, we may have courage continue our fight for the existence of a classical text, even in the contemporary reality. Marcel Proust said the he may not exist any longer in ten years but if he writes a book it may exist one hundred years. And then, why not, one thousand years, or more.

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